

How To Progress: in The Liberal Democrats

Elect Her & 50:50 Parliament's Handbook:

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Introduction

[Elect Her](#) is a multi-partisan organisation that works to motivate, support & equip women in all their diversity to stand for elected office in all spheres of government, providing them with the knowledge, confidence, and skills they need to do it.

We demystify the process of standing for elected office and motivate women to create action plans for standing for political roles.

[50:50 Parliament](#) is a friendly network that works with all of the political parties helping women progress in politics. 50:50 Parliament has been campaigning for women to have equal seats and equal say since 2013 and provides women with confidence and connections to take the next step towards selection.

It's more important than ever to have more women standing and being elected in all spheres of government and we want to signpost you as you establish what part you want to play in that.

The political parties have lots of internal support and networks and we want to make it as easy as possible for you to access them. This guide has been designed for women in our community who are aligned with the Liberal Democrats, to help you understand how to access different areas of support, community and training as you progress within the party. There are different groups and associations across the three nations of Britain and we have tried to include all that information in one place.

If you find additional groups or networks that you've been part of that are missing from these pages, [please get in touch with our team](#) so we can update this guide.

ELECTHER

50:50
PARLIAMENT

1.

The Liberal Democrats

If you are a Lib Dem woman, there are loads of opportunities within the party and its affiliate groups to meet other like-minded women and receive advice on how to progress in politics. Here we hope to help you to navigate the party and the fantastic support that is available to you. Before you get started it is important to remember the Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which they seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no-one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity. [You can learn more about the party's values by reading their constitution.](#)

Now let us help you to navigate the party and the fantastic support that is available to you.

Getting Started

Getting started is often the hardest part of the journey. Here are a few steps that you can take in order to get the ball rolling.

First up, if you haven't done so already, join the Liberal Democrats:

- If you're in England or Wales, join the Lib Dems [here](#).
- Welsh Lib Dems do have their own website with more nationally relevant content which you can access [here](#).
- If you're in Scotland, join the Scottish Lib Dems [here](#).

[This website](#) is really helpful to explain the geographic structure of the party.

It is important to remember that the Liberal Democrats are a grassroots campaigning party. As a candidate you are expected to be the driving force within your local party by building community connections.

Take a look at events and resources designed for women at the start of their journey on the [Elect Her website](#).

- [#SignUpToStand](#) on the 50:50 Parliament website to receive access to their regular support and the community of other women looking to progress in politics. Once you have clicked on #SignUpToStand, you will receive a 'Personal Political Profile' and access to regular party-specific workshops, as well as being paired up with a 50:50 buddy as part of a peer-to-peer support network. You will also be invited to their session offering bespoke support to women from minority groups.
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Ready To Get Involved

So you've got the ball rolling but what are the next steps on your journey?

- [Get in touch with your local Lib Dem party.](#) Once you've joined as a member you should receive emails introducing you to your local party officers and inviting you to participate in local campaigns or meetings.
- [Become an activist](#) and/or take a position and become a Local Party Officer (LPO) Chair, Treasurer, Diversity, Secretary etc. Learning about how things work from the inside will really help you on your journey through the party. Getting your name known by local members is also key as they will be the ones voting for you if and when you want to put yourself forward for election in the future.
- The Liberal Democrats believe strongly in democracy and that is reflected in the organisational structure. Develop your understanding of how the party is

structured and where you want your place to be within that.

- [Sign up to volunteer locally](#) and get involved with local campaigns. Go along to a local meeting, get some door knocking experience under your belt. If an election is called, volunteer for your local candidate's campaign.
- Research what spheres of government you are interested in. This could include, MP, Councillor, a School Governor, a Police and Crime Commissioner Candidate, a Mayoral Candidate, a GLA Candidate, a Senedd or Member of the Scottish Parliament Candidate.
- Attend a party conference - a multiple-day event with panels, talks and networking opportunities. Conferences happen in the autumn and spring. Find out when the next conference is taking place and consider joining.
- Take a look at the [Ready To Get Involved resources](#) on the Elect Her website.

- [Join the 50:50 Parliament Liberal Democrat Bitesize meetings](#) that take place every month.

Lib Dem Organisations and Resources

There are 3 different groups associated with the party that are exclusively for women:

- [Lib Dem Women](#) Join Liberal Democrat Women: An affiliate organisation working to support the party to develop policies that improve the lives of women.
- [Campaign for Gender Balance \(CGB\)](#) are dedicated to supporting women seeking election to public office in all regions of the UK: Specific mentoring is available for all women throughout the process for women and those from an under-represented background. You can get in touch with CGB at: cgb@libdems.org.uk.
- [The Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors \(ALDC\)](#) is a membership organisation that provides advice,

resources and training for Liberal Democrat councillors and activists across Britain. You do not have to be elected to join! They have a great suite of resources, events and even funds for future candidates. We really recommend you join them as part of your journey to getting more active within the party.

Lib Dem Events & Training

- [This event platform](#) tells you about all the events happening across the country that you can get involved with as a member and activist.
 - Sign up for a mailing list to stay up-to-date with events happening locally, regionally, and nationally!
 - The ALDC (mentioned under organisations and resources) [has a whole host of trainings](#) for members to access.
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2.

**Getting
Ready to
Stand**

OK, so you're starting to think that maybe you would like to consider being a candidate in the future. Perhaps there is a local election in your area in 12 months time, what should you be doing now in preparation for that?

- Build connections within your communities - these are the people who will advocate, support and campaign for you when the time comes. Volunteer for local organisations. Support other candidates and be as active as you can in their campaigns.
- Research what spheres of government you are interested in. This could include, MP, Councillor, a School Governor, a Police and Crime Commissioner Candidate, a Mayoral Candidate, a GLA Candidate, a Senedd or Member of the Scottish Parliament Candidate. Elect Her's My Political Future programme has loads of resources to help you understand the different roles and which might suit you - [find that here.](#)

- These are great tools that will help you to connect with your community and document your achievements. Set up your political social media platforms - X, Facebook, Instagram etc. Be aware that your social media will come under scrutiny if selected as a candidate. Worried about online abuse? [Check out Glitch](#) - an amazing charity working to end online abuse and championing digital citizenship. [Access the Digital Self Defence resource that Glitch and Elect Her have created](#) to help you feel safe whilst creating your political profile online.
- [Join Elect Her's Peer Support Circles](#), a 7 part programme that supports you to reflect on how to build a team, your public presence, telling your story and building influence whilst preparing to stand for election in the future.
- The Liberal Democrats are interested in hearing from women wanting to stand in all spheres of government. Register your interest [here](#).

- The Campaign for Gender Balance (CGB) organises training events and offers approval and selection mentoring for women. Learn more [here](#).
- [Read the Lib Dem Guide To Becoming a MP Candidate](#) - this will help you to familiarise yourself with the process. At the end of this document there is a questionnaire that is designed to help you decide whether you are ready to submit an application for assessment.
- Familiarise yourself with Lib Dem party policy. You can read up on a lot of them [here](#). If you are interested in or have experience in particular policy areas you can help make policy by:
 - Submitting motions and amendments to conference.
 - Join working groups.
 - Respond to policy consultations (individually or with your local party).

- Speak at a party conference or participate in some way.
 - Take a look at the [Getting Ready to Stand resources](#) on the Elect Her website.
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3.

Selection

&

Election

There will come a time when you are ready to put yourself forward as a potential candidate whether it is for a local, regional, devolved or national election. We are here to cheer you on as you do it! We call this the selection phase - as your party needs to select you to be the candidate and then the election phase as you run a campaign to become elected.

The team at Elect Her provide training, community and support to women who are specifically at the selection and election stage. [Find out more on our website here](#) where we detail the training, workshops and candidate clinics that we schedule around the electoral cycle.

Below we have outlined the process of putting yourself forward as we understand it. The party has outlined the process on their website [here](#), which you should also read and reference when gathering local information from your association.



Standing For Office

How to stand as a councillor for the Lib Dem Party:

Here we have gathered details on the process of standing as a councillor for the Liberal Democrats.

The process for selecting candidates is run by local parties, and can differ depending on where you are based. There isn't a one fixed process, but the process broadly looks like this:

- 1. Complete approval form to confirm eligibility, party commitment and values.**
 - Submit it to the selection committee in your local party.
- 2. Interview with the selection committee in your local party.**
 - Selection then happens so that local members can choose their candidate. Selection is like an internal election, so use it as an opportunity to practise campaigning.

As part of the selection process you can:

- Contact all members in your ward (it's your legal right to be given a list of all members in your area).
 - Create a simple leaflet about yourself and post it through the doors of all members.
 - Speak to all your members and get them onside, so they'll vote for you at selection and then support you on your campaign once you are selected as the candidate.
3. For each selection there is a hustling and local members vote for their chosen candidate.

How to stand as an MP for the Liberal Democrats:

If you are interested in standing as an MP, you can contact the LDHQ Candidates team at candidates@libdems.org.uk.

1. Complete the application form to become an Approved MP Candidate. You can find the form and Code of Conduct [here](#).
 - The form is used to ensure that you are who you say you are and that you are eligible to stand for Parliament. The application form does not form part of the assessment and is not seen by the assessors. You will be charged a £75 administration fee. If you find covering the cost of this fee a barrier to applying then please contact the Candidates' Office.
 - At this stage the Candidates Office will also order a Digital Risk Assessment to audit your online and social media history.
2. Once you have returned the completed application form and done your digital risk assessment you'll be able to take your one hour online, open book policy paper which is the first stage of the assessment. If you don't pass, you can re-take this once.

3. If you pass you will be invited to attend an assessment day. At the assessment day, you will take part in a variety of exercises designed to allow you to show the assessors how you would perform as a parliamentary candidate. Information about these exercises will be sent to you in order to give you time to prepare.
4. If you pass the assessment you will immediately become an Approved Candidate. You will then be able to apply for seats when they come up for selection.
5. Seat Selection - Shortlisting Candidates and Hustings. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend a husting where each candidate addresses the local party members and answers questions individually. In the run-up to this, you can campaign to encourage local members to vote for you. This can include leaflets, phone calls, etc.

Selection is like an internal election, so use it as an opportunity to practise campaigning.

6. Stand In a General Election or By-Election.

- As soon as you have been selected as a candidate for a seat, you can begin to campaign in your constituency and start to encourage people to vote for you when an election is called.
 - Build an Election Team - this can include a social media lead, press, leafleting team, door knockers etc. These are the people that will support your campaign to become an MP.
 - It is also important you have an Election Agent, who is legally responsible for the proper management and financial aspects of your campaign.
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4.

Financial Support

It costs a lot to stand for election. Your local party should support the costs of your campaign, printing leaflets and posters, etc., but there are often additional personal costs. Elect Her also runs Fund Her, a grant giving scheme for women from marginalised communities who require additional financial support on their journey to elected office. You can find out more [here](#).

For people in Scotland with a disability that face additional financial burdens on their election campaigns, the [‘Access To Elected Office Fund’ is administered by Inclusion Scotland](#). Contact their team to find out more.

[Disability Wales](#) host the Access to Elected Office Fund for people in Wales with a disability that face additional financial burdens on their election campaigns. Contact their team [here](#).

Unfortunately, there is currently no access to elected office funds available for disabled people in England.



Contact.

Support, structures, processes and groups around the associations and national party are changing and evolving all the time. If you know of spaces of support, discussion and interest within the party that you think we should add to this guide then please do get in touch.

We are also looking to add to the collection of images which are currently featured in this guide as it continues to grow. If you have images of yourself and other women within your community that you'd like us to feature in this guide, please submit them to us via the link on the following page.

Images should be of a high quality and contain credits in the email.

We have worked to gather all of the information that we have learnt over the past few years about how to get involved in the Liberal Democrats, but we need your support to continue to develop this work.

Please contact the team:

community@elect-her.org.uk

with ideas and feedback you might have.



Credits.

We are enormously grateful to all of those individuals in our community and in the political parties who have shared their knowledge, experience and insights to enable us to create these guides.

Including, but not limited to:

Hannah Perkin, Candy Piercy,
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